

New Year's Resolutions to Ensure a Healthy Smile

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Good oral health is essential to overall health. Many people do not assign the same importance to dental health as they do to other types of physical health. Here are some New Year's Resolutions to help you keep your resolve for healthy teeth and gums in the coming year.

- ❖ **Resolve to get teeth checked and cleaned every six months**, or more frequently if recommended. Most oral problems are preventable; they tend to be progressive, and do not improve without treatment. www.ada.org, www.adha.org.
- ❖ **Resolve to disclose all medical conditions and medications** at every dental appointment to aid in the oral examination and diagnosis. Many medications cause changes in gums, or contribute to a dry mouth, that increases the risk of dental caries (cavities). www.nidcr.nih.gov/sgr/oralhealth.asp.
- ❖ **Resolve to reduce the consumption of sugar and snacks**. Sugar combines with the bacteria in your mouth to produce acid that attacks your teeth for 20 minutes each time. If you are unable to brush, then rinse your mouth with water or chew sugarless gum. Constant "grazing" throughout the day exposes teeth to **hours** of acids attacking them. <http://www.brightfutures.org/nutrition/pdf/index.html>
- ❖ **Resolve to drink water, not soda**. It is estimated that we consume 56 gallons of carbonated drinks each year, or more than one-and-a-half 12 ounce can per day. Diet sodas still contain acid that contributes to decay. Water has no sugar, no acid, and no calories. "Soda is to teeth as cigarettes are to lungs". Check out "Sip All Day, Get Decay" at www.mndental.org or "Stop the Pop" at http://www.modental.org/Stop_Pop/Stop_The_Pop.html
- ❖ **Resolve not to use any tobacco products**, including spit tobacco to reduce the risk of oral cancer. www.nstep.org, www.kanstop.org, Kansas Tobacco Quitline 1-866-KAN-STOP
- ❖ **Resolve to protect your teeth with fluorides and sealants**. Drink fluoridated water, or check with your dentist or physician to see if your children need to take a fluoride supplement. Brush with fluoride toothpaste, or a fluoride gel. Children over the age of six may benefit from a fluoride rinse. Sealants are a hard plastic coating placed on the chewing surfaces of the back teeth to prevent decay. http://www.ada.org/public/topics/sealants_faqs.asp, http://www.kpha.bluestep.net/shared/layouts/singleblock.jsp?_event=view&_id=120130_c_sU128181_s_i137984.
- ❖ **Resolve that anyone playing a contact sport will wear a mouth guard**. Wearing a mouth guard can prevent concussions as well as prevent trauma to the mouth and teeth. <http://www.aapd.org/members/referencemanual/pdfs/02-03/Prevention%20sports%20injury.pdf>

- ❖ **Resolve to replace your toothbrush every 3 months**, or sooner if needed, especially after a cold or the flu. Even electric toothbrush heads need to be replaced every three months. Use only a soft toothbrush.
http://www.cdc.gov/OralHealth/infection_control/fact_sheet/toothbrushes.htm.
- ❖ **Resolve, if pregnant, to have teeth cleaned** within the first trimester if possible. Discuss at this time the proper care of your own teeth, as well as your baby's teeth. It is especially important to maintain good oral health during pregnancy, as women with periodontal (gum) disease may have up to a **seven** times higher likelihood of premature birth. www.modimes.org, <http://www.perio.org/>.
- ❖ **Resolve to floss daily**. Flossing removes food particles and bacteria from between the teeth, and below the gum line that the toothbrush just can't reach. Be sure to wrap the floss around the tooth in a U-shape and slide it up and down the tooth several times.
http://www.agd.org/media/news_releases.html,
<http://www.ada.org/public/games/animation/interface.swf>.
- ❖ **Resolve to brush longer**. It should take four minutes (**or longer**) twice a day. Direct your toothbrush toward the gums at a 45-degree angle, brushing in tiny circles, and counting to ten slowly, to ensure thoroughness on each tooth. Be sure to brush your tongue to reduce bacteria and bad breath. **MINUTES** a day preventing dental disease is better than **HOURS** in the dental chair and/or **YEARS** of wearing false teeth! .
<http://www.perio.org/>, <http://www.ada.org/public/games/animation/interface.swf>.
- ❖ **Resolve to get the smile you have always wanted!** Replace missing teeth. Consider orthodontic treatment (braces). Explore all the options of bonding, veneers, or crowns. Whiten your teeth. **Smile with confidence!**
<http://www.braces.org/braces/news/>,
http://www.adha.org/downloads/tooth_whitening_factsheet.pdf.

Stick To Your Resolutions To Start The New Year With A Smile.
<http://www.kdhe.state.ks.us/ohi>